Interview with Allen C. Hansen

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ALLEN C. HANSEN

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Q: Allen, I'm going to go back prior to your association with USIA to get a little fill-in on who you are and where you came from and what your education was.

Bio Sketch

HANSEN: I was born in a small town in New Jersey and went into the Navy when I was 18 years old, in World War II, and stayed in for three and a half years. When I came out of the Navy I went to Syracuse University, graduated with a B.A. in Political Science, and became a newspaper reporter. Then when the Korean War came along, I got called back into the Navy. When I got out, I was discharged as a Lieutenant (j.g.) in naval intelligence.

Q: Where did you spend your time during the Korean War?

HANSEN: Actually, aboard ship in the Atlantic, and then in the Naval Intelligence School in Washington before being assigned to intelligence duties in the Washington area. I always thought it was ironic that having been in the intelligence field, where, as we all know, one collects information, I ended up in a career with USIA, an organization that does the opposite by giving away information.

Circumstances Leading to Employment With USIA

The way that came about, I attended a FLEA luncheon in Washington, D.C. a few months before I was about to be discharged from the Navy. FLEA, in this instance, stands for “Federal Law Enforcement Agencies.” At that luncheon I learned that one of my colleagues had been with USIA before being recalled to active duty in the navy during the Korean War. This was in the summer of 1954. The junior officer training program was being initiated by USIA which was, itself, new. I knew absolutely nothing about the USIA but began to explore what it was all about. Eventually I was accepted as one of the nine persons selected to participate in the second junior officer training class which consisted of six men and three women.

Q: I see there's an article about you as USIA's most senior JOT. (USIA World, October 1987) Do you want to make some comments about that?

HANSEN: It should be “ex-JOT,” obviously. The reason for that article was that I was the most senior ex-JOT on active duty when that article was written, just before I retired. I had been in the second JOT class of the agency, and all of those who had been in the first class—there were, I believe, seven in the first class—as well as all of the others in my class had left the Agency. I was the only one of those first two groups who was still on active duty (until I retired in July of 1987).

Q: That's quite a change. Can you recall what was involved in your training and how long was the training at that point?

HANSEN: The training was almost as it is today, a few months in Washington, with some people going to language school afterwards and approximately nine months overseas in a training position, where the attempt was made to learn the various jobs of a typical USIS post.

Q: So this was practical training more than a kind of book or seminar training, is that right?

HANSEN: Yes. Except for the two months in Washington, it was on-the-job training.

Initial Junior Officer Trainee Assignment to Caracas

Q: I see you were assigned originally to USIS Caracas. That was your first overseas assignment as a trainee?

HANSEN: Yes.

Q: Did you ask to go to Latin America?

HANSEN: No. Actually, when I got out of the Navy, I had gone to Europe and had gotten a job in Madrid with Brown-Raymond-Walsh, the prime contractors building the Spanish-American airbases. I thought that surely after three months in Madrid, where I had worked before returning to Washington to be paneled for the JOT job, USIA would send me right back there as by then I considered myself somewhat of an expert on Spain. Much to my surprise, they sent me to Caracas. I had no idea at the time where Caracas was, but I soon found out.

Q: Did you have Spanish at that time when you came into the agency, or did they give you Spanish training.

HANSEN: No. I had studied Spanish a little bit in college and had traveled a bit in Mexico and studied Spanish on my own when I was in Madrid and elsewhere.

Q: So you went in with some language background. Did you take a language test during your training period?

HANSEN: I don't believe so, but later on I took a language test and by that time I had served in so many Spanish-speaking countries that I was able to get along fine.

Q: Your biographical notes indicate that by 1956 you had completed your training and you were married. Your bride was from Latin America?

HANSEN: She was from the island of Trinidad, actually, but I met her in Caracas. In those days, when an officer got married to a non-American, the officer had to resign, which I did. Fortunately, my resignation was not accepted.

Q: Did they require in those days that a foreign-born wife move toward taking of citizenship? What was the process at that time in 1956?

HANSEN: They encouraged a foreign-born wife to become an American citizen. I don't think it was compulsory, but in my case, my wife wanted to become an American citizen, and I also wanted her to become a citizen. What was made possible was that we didn't have to wait the usual five years. So as soon as we got home, on home leave, we arranged it, and she became an American citizen.

Q: It's interesting to make these points, because the law and the situation changes from time to time in the history of the agency about the requirements of foreign-born wives and the requirements about retirement.

HANSEN: It certainly has.

Q: You were assigned to Mexico. Can you tell us anything about Mexico, your role in Mexico at this time?

HANSEN: First, let me say a little bit about Caracas. In those days there were only three USIS officers at that post and I, as a JOT, was the fourth. Among other things, there was so much that I didn't know, but in a few months I had to be the acting information officer, so I learned fast. Harry Kendall, who had been the information officer, left on transfer, and Bob Amerson, who was new to the agency at the time, was coming to replace him, but there was a two-month lapse. So with that experience and other things, by the time I

arrived in Mexico after a year-and-a-half in Caracas, I had begun to learn a little bit about the work of the agency.

Assignment to USIS/Mexico

I went to Mexico as publications and distribution officer. We were doing a lot of printing for Central American USIS posts in those days. The USIS Mexico publication and distribution unit, which I was in charge of, had about 25 employees at the time. Much later this unit became the agency's Regional Service Center for Latin America and was completely detached from USIS Mexico, but at that time it was an integral part of USIS. While in Mexico I was asked at various times to fill in as the Executive Officer when that individual went on leave; as Radio and TV Officer; and as Motion Picture Officer. Thus in the year and a half that I was in Mexico I received some well-rounded experience.

Q: Let us go back. Tell us a little about life in Venezuela, particularly in Caracas, and then let's move on and do the same thing about Mexico City. Is this when Caracas was still undeveloped, or was this after it moved on to become really a very powerful hub?

HANSEN: Caracas, though the capital of Venezuela, was very underdeveloped at that time. It was almost like a cow town although it had a population of about one million. Today it's well over five million. In those days, perhaps five million was the total population of all of Venezuela. The president at the time was Perez Jimenez, a military dictator. Just by coincidence, as my wife and I were en route from Mexico to British Guiana (the post we went to after Mexico), and had stopped off in Caracas, it was the weekend that Perez Jimenez—or “P.J.” as he was universally referred to—was overthrown. That was quite an exciting time.One of the things we were doing in Venezuela when I was stationed there was pushing Eisenhower's “Atoms for Peace” project. I recall our press chief—who was an Argentine who had to leave Argentina during the Peron era and had ended up in Caracas—was a very capable fellow who would take a story like the Atoms for Peace project and find some reference to Venezuela buried in the story. He would highlight that fact, giving

the whole story a local angle, and with it we would hit the front pages of all major dailies in Caracas. That was the kind of thing we were capable of doing.

At the same time, television was just coming to Caracas. George Butler, who was the PAO, had been with CBS earlier. He was very much into TV. He started an educational program on television with a local radio commentator (under contract with USIS) named Renny Ottolina. Ottolina later became “Mr. TV” in Venezuela because of a daily, four-hour talk show he ran years later. He got his first TV training, however, in USIS under George Butler's direction. I'm sure many others in developing countries learned the communications business working for USIS, but I doubt that few if anyone could match Ottolina's highly successful television career. (He was to die later in a tragic plane crash at the height of his career after getting involved in local politics.)

Q: When you moved on to Mexico, you obviously were doing all information-type work. What about Mexico in 1956-57? What about Mexico City? Did you travel around? Tell us a little about Mexico.

HANSEN: Mexico, certainly in those days, also was in the underdeveloped category, very much so, but Mexico City was then, as it is now, one of the largest cities in the world. So there were sections of the city much more developed than what one would find in Caracas. But the city problems of pollution and overpopulation and slums and poverty and so forth were as prevalent there as they were in Caracas., although more so.

I remember we moved about five miles away from the center of the city after living in Mexico City about six months in a downtown apartment, and after we had moved, as I drove every morning to the Embassy, you could see this black cloud in the center of the city. It was the handwriting in the sky, if you wish—a warning of what was going to happen to Mexico City as time went on. The pollution could only get worse, as it did. But because they had so many other problems, they couldn't handle this one. They gave no priority to the pollution problem. But they have suffered for it ever since.

Q: Was the traffic very serious at that point as it has become subsequently?

HANSEN: Well, in a way, it was more serious, because they have these large "glorietas" (traffic circles) in Mexico City. You took your life in your hands whenever you had to cross the street, so much so that at the time one of the leading newspapers used to publish, on the front page, the names of people killed in traffic accidents the day before. That usually numbered maybe 50 or 75.

Q: What kind of stories were you carrying in your various roles as radio and TV? What were the subjects of most interest at that time? What was USIA's area of policy concerns?

HANSEN: Actually, I was not directly involved with press operations. On the motion picture side, we emphasized the cultural and education aspects of U. S. society. In my role as publications and distribution officer, we also were doing a lot in the cultural and educational fields, but also in explaining T. S. policies. In that 18 months that I was in Mexico City I was not directly involved with the day-to-day information activities and crises of the day. Even our TV activities tended to be of the documentary type.

Q: Did you travel around at all, or were you always primarily in Mexico City?

HANSEN: We traveled a little, but I did not travel extensively.

Q: For USIA?

HANSEN: Yes, most of the time.

Transfer to British Guiana

Q: You were then directly transferred from Mexico to Georgetown, British Guiana. How did that come about?

HANSEN: Well, one morning I received a letter signed by Frank Oram who was then area director, informing me that I was to be transferred to Georgetown, British Guiana; that there was great concern in Washington that “B.G.” might become “the second Cuba.” This was a very challenging assignment for a young, relatively inexperienced officer. There had been considerable discussion in Washington (I learned later) as to whether or not they should send an officer as young and inexperienced as I was at the time to that hot spot, but they decided to do so. This was just before Christmas, so we were able to stay on in Mexico City for Christmas and the New Year's, and then we left, my wife and I.

It was on the way to Georgetown that we stopped off in Caracas for the weekend, when, as I mentioned earlier, Perez Jimenez was leaving town, forced out by his military colleagues.When we arrived in Georgetown, then, for the first time, I truly knew what an underdeveloped country is. Georgetown is, we used to say, at the end of the line, but then you go over to Dutch Guiana to the south, and you think the same thing, and from there you go further south to French Guiana, and that really is the end of the line!

But in any event, Georgetown is a place, we used to say, where you could be six feet under and still breathing. The reason for this is that the town is about five feet below sea level. The Dutch, when they ruled that section of the Guianas, built dikes to keep out the sea while water from the tropical downpours flows into Georgetown from the land side. If it's high tide, they can't open the sluice gates to let the water out until the tide goes down. So the water sits there after a heavy rainstorm until they can let the water run out a low tide. Occasionally the sea wall breaks and the sea comes in anyway. Therefore, a lot of buildings in British Guiana, in Georgetown and elsewhere along the coast, are on stilts. Georgetown itself is interspersed with canals to drain the area.

At the time of my assignment to Georgetown, President Eisenhower was in the White House. There was great concern that British Guiana, which would soon get its independence, would very possibly become a second Cuba (as mentioned earlier) inasmuch as the prime minister at the time was Cheddi Jagan. Jagan, usually described

as a Marxist, was very friendly with the Cubans and the Soviets. His leanings were certainly in the Communist direction. So the feeling in Washington was that it was time to have a USIS office there.

Q: You were the first one to go in?

HANSEN: I was the first American USIA officer to be stationed there. We did have a library that had been set up by a Guianese employee under the direction of the PAO in Trinidad. My job was a branch PAO, reporting to the PAO in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad (who was Gar Routt at the time). Again (as in Mexico), I was there for a year-and-a-half.

Q: How was it? What did you go through to open up a new post in a place like that?

Left Leaning Cheddi Jagan Blocks American MovesTo Aid and Gain Influence in Guiana

HANSEN: The small library was, of course, our cultural center. The whole city had only 100,000 population at the time, and there were about three newspapers that, perhaps, we could do some business with. I made it a point to get to know the newspaper editors and writers and political cartoonists.

The leading cartoonist in Georgetown and I became friends. I used to give him ideas for some of his cartoons, which he would occasionally use. I always thought that was a great thing from our point of view. Everyone was very friendly, but the political situation was such that Cheddi Jagan and the Peoples Progressive Party (PPP) were on one end, and the American consulate—we had a consulate there at the time—was, in a sense, on the other. We tried to have an AID program there. A few people from AID were assigned to B.G. but Cheddi Jagan and his PPP were always attempting to keep the Americans from gaining influence, so while the local government talked a lot about the need for more economic assistance from the Americans and others, Prime Minister Jagan and the PPP managed to keep the AID program small while putting up road blocks with regard to the few AID programs that were initiated.

Q: You didn't find any problems being an American, even though there were Communist leanings? Or did you?

HANSEN: No, I really didn't find any problem. As a matter of fact, there was a young man named Ranji Chandisingh who was one of Cheddi Jagan's lieutenants and the editor of the PPP newspaper, Thunder. We became friendly enough for him to invite me to his home one day to try some East Indian cooking which his mother prepared. (Like many Guianese, he was of East Indian descent.) While we were sociable we discussed our diametrically-opposed political views but each always left through the same door by which he entered. British Guiana-Guyana as it is know today—is known as the “Land of Six Peoples.” The major ethnic group is of African descent; next are the East Indians who arrived from India to be indentured laborers; then the Portuguese—they distinguish them as a group; and the Chinese and the Amerindians—so-called to distinguish the indigenous Indians from the East Indians. The sixth and smallest minority, about one percent or less of the population, was the Caucasian group.

Effectiveness of Marian Anderson Film

Shortly after I had arrived in Georgetown the agency had obtained a film—perhaps it was a USIA film—of the trip to India of the renowned black American singer, Marian Anderson. I thought: what a marvelous way to introduce myself to the community if we could show that film in the USIS library! While racial problems existed, of course, between blacks and whites, the big problem in Guiana was between the blacks and the East Indians (mainly because they were an economic threat to each other—or so they thought—being the two major local groups in size). So here, in an hour-long documentary, was Marian Anderson, an American black, who takes this marvelous trip through India to perform for the Indians! So we set that up and invited Prime Minister Jagan and his American-born wife, Janet Jagan, along with other local notables to the grand opening of the new USIS office. Cheddi Jagan didn't come but his wife, Janet, who was Minister of Labor in the Jagan government,

did. The film was a big hit. So much so, that for the next year or two the B.G. Government Information Services borrowed a copy and showed it all over the country.

Q: It is amazing how a visual can be used very effectively in getting through all sorts of barriers. I assume, then, there wasn't any language problem in British Guiana. Was English the going language?

HANSEN: Yes, English. We always joked, however, that there are at least three types of English—American English, English-English, and Guyanese English.

Q: You weren't there very long. You were there something less than two years?

HANSEN: Yes.

Q: In view of the fact that you were new, or USIS was new, what did you feel the biggest triumph was that laid the ground work for later action?

HANSEN: I think that our cultural and educational influence was what was most lasting, and most important, really, because Georgetown, which is the only city in Guyana, is so isolated from the rest of the world. In those days, they were isolating themselves even further by ignoring or turning off any economic assistance from the United States, and turning, as Cheddi Jagan and his Peoples Progressive Party were doing, to Cuban and Soviet influence.

Jagan Loses Power After Independence

The upshot of that, however, was that Cheddi Jagan never retained power after independence was declared. A black politician, Forbes Burnham, who had been Jagan's deputy years before, ran against him, and by hook or crook—and I use the term advisedly—took over the government when British Guiana became independent. Burnham stayed in

power for about 20 years, until one day he had to have a throat operation. As I understand it, he had a Cuban surgeon work on his throat in 1985 and he didn't survive.

Q: Some very interesting conclusions can be drawn from that.

Sad Story of Guyana's Politico/Economic Problems

HANSEN: Yes. But the sad commentary is that the U.S. in those days was trying to convince the British that B.G. was a great danger to the western world if it became a second Cuba. The British were inclined to think, “Well, Jagan's a nationalist.” They were much less concerned. But I think the American point of view won out. The U. S. Government devoted considerable resources—USIS is just a small reflection of this, by instituting more AID programs later and no doubt the other agency was involved down there. But the end result is that Guyana today is probably just as poor as it was in those days. My feeling at this point is that I think that if we had kept out of it, they might have been better off, and U.S. interests would not have been seriously affected. Of course, we have no way of knowing. (Note: In January 1989, the Washington Post reported that “despite the long years of hardship and discontent, the ruling socialists have won every general election since 1964. “Jagan's American-born wife, Janet, is also in politics. Her explanation of PNC's 25 years of electoral success is widely shared both at home and abroad. Since they were catapulted into office, we have had one rigged election after another, she said.” Her husband Cheddi Jagan, still active as the major opposition all these years, joined forces in 1988 with three other opposition parties in the “Patriotic Coalition for Democracy” to try to unseat Burnham's successor, President Desmond Hoyte who was allegedly trying to open Guyana to foreign capital. The small, still impoverished country remained in 1989 with a $1.2 billion debt.)

Q: You went on from British Guiana in 1959 to Madrid, where you were ACAO in charge of the new textbook translation program and, obviously, some other cultural duties. What about this assignment?

Madrid

HANSEN: That was rather interesting in the beginning. There existed about $500,000 (equivalent in Spanish pesetas), which was a considerable sum of money in those days, in a fund for a new textbook translation program. These were PL 480 funds that we could use. No one had found the time to make use of these funds, so they established a new position and I suppose that having been at this hardship post in Georgetown for 18 months, they knew Madrid would be a nice place to which to transfer me.

Ups and Downs of Book Translation Program in Spain

So I went there to run this program. The idea was that it was to be a five year program—$100,000 per year. But in the first year there was a devaluation of the Spanish peseta. Overnight the $100,000 was reduced to $65,000 (equivalent). Nevertheless, I went down to Barcelona, which then, as now, is the publishing center of Spain, if not the entire Spanish-speaking world, with this $65,000 in my pocket, so to speak, and made arrangements with various local publishers to translate and publish American textbooks. In the first year of the program we made contracts to publish 43 titles, which I thought was pretty good, and I think everybody else did.

But then, the following year, they decided that the remaining funds (originally $400,000) would be used for other purposes. So the textbook program which had begun so auspiciously abruptly ended.

It is ironic that more than two decades later USIA established a regional book office (for Latin America primarily) in Barcelona! I had strongly argued for that at the time, using all kinds of evidence that we won't go into here, but finally a book translation office was established in the publishing center of the Spanish-speaking world. (Note: In 1987 the newly-established Regional Book Office was closed except for one employee due to budgetary and other considerations.)

Q: Life in Madrid, then, was pleasant for you at that particular time. How large a post was it? What about Spain?

HANSEN: Spain was just marvelous in those days, and I've been back several times since. It's still marvelous. But I had thought that in going there from Georgetown, that this is going to be a piece of cake, because I'd been there before and I would adjust easily. I did not realize that it would be so different. When I was there before, I was a bachelor. Now I was coming back with my wife, in fact, our three-month old son as well. When I look back, I think I had a more difficult time adjusting back into the Spanish culture than I had in any other country. For one thing, we had to adapt to Spanish hours whenever we wanted to eat out, and you couldn't begin to eat dinner until 8:30 or 9:00 PM at the earliest which was highly inconvenient with a baby in the family. When we first arrived, we were living in an apartment that was cold, so on and so forth. But eventually, of course, as in all posts, we adjusted and we settled down. Then it was absolutely marvelous, that Spanish living.

I had a lot of other duties as assistant cultural attach#, but there were at that time three ACAOs. Jake Canter was the Cultural Attach# originally, and he was replaced by Leopold Arnaud, former dean of the School of Architecture at Columbia University. Both of them were delightful persons to work for.

Q: So Arnaud, then, was one of that big group of cultural attach#s throughout the years who have come from academia or outside the agency, brought in because of their knowledge of the country.

HANSEN: This man—its a debatable thing. He certainly brought a lot of prestige to the embassy and USIS. On the other hand, as far as the nitty-gritty was concerned, that, of course, ended up being done by one of the ACAOs, Dick Phillips in this case. Not the well-known Dick Phillips (during this era) of the State Department.

Q: USIA?

HANSEN: Yes, a USIA officer.

Q: What level textbooks were these, college textbooks or high school?

HANSEN: College, university.

Q: Upper level textbooks?

HANSEN: Yes.

Q: From Madrid, you came back to the United States, I assume.

HANSEN: Yes.

Hansen Selected for University Training

Q: And went on to the University of Pennsylvania. How did all of that come about? You indicate that you were one of the early two to study American culture and received an M.A. What about that situation?

HANSEN: The agency at that time had initiated a program of advanced university training for USIA officers in American studies. Barbara White was the first one to go into that program. She went to Harvard. I merely applied. I knew I was coming back to the states, and it was something I would like to do. Not very many people applied, so I received the assignment. I came back, and everybody thought I wanted to go to Harvard—and maybe I should have. But my mother was ill at the time in New Jersey and I wanted to be closer to home. I also found, when I went around and visited the University of Pennsylvania and a few other places, that I could get a master's degree there in one year if I worked at it. (Harvard and others required two years at the time.) Since Philadelphia is right next to New Jersey, that worked out for my personal reasons. I received my master's in that one year.

Q: You worked in American culture, rather than American studies. What did that mean?

HANSEN: That's a good question. It means different things in different places. The University of Pennsylvania “American Studies” program specializes in American literature, whereas another American Studies program at another university might specialize in American history, etc.

Q: So you were following through on literature. This is again your interest in books and publishing and textbooks. This has followed you certainly throughout this early part of your career. What did you do your paper on for your master's?

HANSEN: My thesis was entitled Ugly, Quiet, and Real Americans. It was an analysis of The Ugly American by Lederer and Burdick, The Quiet American by Graham Greene, which takes place in Vietnam, as did The Ugly American, and the real Americans were the Foreign Service officers which I analyzed using the Biographic Register and other sources such as The Overseas Americans by Harlan Cleveland.

Caribbean Desk Officer

Then I went back to Washington, and Hugh Ryan was area director at the time. Again, there was concern about Guyana going communist, and Hugh Ryan knew that I was one of the few specialists on Georgetown. He therefore assigned me the job of Caribbean Desk Officer in order to utilize my expertise on the country that had been “British Guiana” before independence. Shortly after my arrival in Washington following my academic year in Philadelphia, he sent me to Georgetown to see what we might do to beef up the post. I came back and recommended that we double the size of the post—from one American officer to two. There was some concern that since this wouldn't take a great deal of money, others in government might think we were not being serious enough with regard to this situation. However, I argued that given the size of Guiana, with a 100,000 population in the capital city and only 500,000 in the entire country, to put more than two officers there

would be overkill. For the next ten years or so we probably had two officers there until the post reverted once again to a one-person post, which is really all that such a small country requires in my view.

Q: A major accomplishment.

HANSEN: And that's what we did. But during that time as Caribbean Desk Officer, a most interesting thing to me was that the Dominican crisis broke.

The Dominican Crisis and the USIS Role

Q: What was the Dominican crisis? This is in 1965.

HANSEN: 1965, right. Cuba again showed its hand. LBJ was president at the time, and a civil war broke out in the Dominican Republic, sometime after the assassination of their long-time military dictator there, Trujillo. It looked like the people who represented the left, and were presumably supported by the Cubans, if not the Soviets, were going to take over. The American government decided that that was not to be and sent in some 22,000 troops to assure that the country's leaders who wanted free elections would be able to hold them. Now, every Latin American specialist knows that the worst thing, from a Latin American point of view, that the U.S. can do is to intervene in another country's affairs, especially military intervention. But we had to live with that. As far as USIA was concerned, Hugh Ryan (Area Director Hewson Ryan) went down with a task force of USIA officers to work on the internal and mammoth external public affairs problems this situation caused.

Q: You mean shortly after the troops landed?

HANSEN: This was maybe a few weeks after the troops landed. Because what happened, there was a stalemate. The U.S., of course, could have just wiped out the leftist revolutionaries, but that wasn't the idea. The idea was to try and see if this country couldn't get back to a democratic form of government with elections and so forth. The way the

stalemate occurred was that the leftists held the center of the capital, Santo Domingo, and the rest of the country, practically, was in the hands of the people—some would say Rightists, but certainly the non-revolutionists.So while that stalemate was occurring, the U.S. sent a task force which included the USIA contingent, which tried to get the two sides together and tried to get some kind of responsible local government going that would be viable and where eventually elections could be held. One of the major things that the U.S. Administration wanted to do was to turn this whole mess over to the Organization of American States (OAS) as soon as possible. Eventually that is what occurred. The American troops left as did the Americans who were not assigned to the OAS or to the Embassy, and elections were eventually held. I was involved somewhat in that which I'll explain later. First, when I went down there for about three weeks during the fighting—I say fighting, but it was mainly during the stalemate. But the bullets were still flying between the lines, though the American troops tried to hold ground or make limited advances without killing anyone.

Q: What were the American troops doing?

HANSEN: After they had landed, they protected those areas of the city that were not in the hands of the rebel troops who were fighting against the established government.

Q: I see. Did you have evidence of Cuban intervention or Russian intervention in the situation?

HANSEN: This was what the American government was saying, and I assume they had it.

Q: But you had no first-hand knowledge?

HANSEN: I had no first-hand knowledge, no.

Q: You went down and worked with Hugh Ryan?

HANSEN: Darrell Carter, who was Hugh Ryan's deputy at the time, replaced Hugh Ryan. As mentioned earlier, I was the Caribbean Desk Officer. When Darrell moved up I became his deputy. But my main job during my temporary duty on the island was one of working with the OAS information representative to attempt to locate a usable radio station in the non-rebel zone that the OAS could take over as the "Voice of the OAS." Up until that time the 82nd Airborne Division, which had come in along with the Psyops group, had established a temporary radio station. That was the only radio station in the country that was operating, except for the rebel station in downtown Santo Domingo in the area held by the rebels. All the others were off the air. Eventually we found a suitable station. As soon as the OAS started broadcasting from that station the Psyops group was able to close down and left with the American troops, as did I.

Q: How was it working with the OAS, as a United States Government official and the OAS as an institution? Were there any problems, or did it all go pretty smoothly?

HANSEN: None at that time, and not on the working level, no problems at all. We had the same objective. We wanted the OAS to really be responsible for this. We thought they were the ones that should be—of course, that took the heat off of the United States. Later on I got involved in what I called the "get out the vote" campaign. The U.S. could not openly pursue (nor should it have) an objective of getting any particular person to become president of the Dominican Republic, but this was a country that had experienced so many years of military dictatorship and was unaccustomed to democratic procedures. Furthermore, the literacy rate was very low. There had to be some kind of education training in the democratic processes so that Dominicans could learn what votes and elections are all about. So one of the things we did, we devised some cartoon fashion, very simple, about what you do when you vote and what happens when you vote, and the importance of voting and so forth. This campaign was actually very successful in the Dominican Republic. Some months later, an election was held, and President Hector

Garcia Godoy, who had been the provisional president prior to elections, won. Based on the success in the “D.R” the same system was tried in Vietnam but with far less success.

Q: You mean the same use of cartoons?

HANSEN: The same use of cartoons and so forth with Vietnamese characters.

Q: Why do you think it was successful in the Dominican Republic and not in Vietnam?

HANSEN: The two situations were completely different. The Dominican Republic went on to become a democratic government and was not invaded by a rebel army. Of course, in Vietnam, North Vietnam eventually took over.

Q: And did the OAS continue to watch the situation very closely?

HANSEN: They did for a while, and then, of course, they dropped out of it, too, and the country ran itself. An interesting sidelight is that 20 years later, I was representing USIS in a country team meeting as deputy PAO in Pakistan during the absence of the PAO, and Ambassador Spiers at the time, who is now Under Secretary of State for Administration...

Q: Ronald Spiers.

HANSEN: Ronald Spiers. He and most of his State Department colleagues were absolutely upset, is a good word, I guess, the morning after the Grenada invasion. I had been through this, in a sense, in the Dominican Republic. I'll come back to this in a minute. But I said at that country team meeting in Islamabad the morning after the Grenada “rescue mission,” “Why don't we just wait and see, because 20 years ago, the U.S. and LBJ were so criticized for sending troops into the Dominican Republic, and yet ever since then, the Dominican Republic has been a democracy. And economically, while it may not be doing so well, it's doing better than a lot of its neighbors.” Of course, what happened

in Grenada, at least from my point of view, is that it's a damn good thing we went in. But that's another story.

American Liberal Press Hurt USIS and OASE Efforts in Dominican Crisis

At the time of the Dominican crisis, one of the most difficult things we had to face as USIS officers is an antagonistic American liberal press. Members of the press, the foreign correspondents, a lot of them—not all of them, would accept as gospel truth anything that the rebel side said, or what they said on the radio or later in briefings. But when the correspondents were getting briefings from American officials or the military officials at the time, anything said was suspect and was often reported as suspect.

Q: That's how it was in Vietnam, too.

HANSEN: Yes, sure. And then I remember, whether it was The New York Times or the Washington Post, but anyway, in the American press, the view was that what LBJ did by sending those 22,000 troops into Santo Domingo put American foreign policy in Latin America back 40 years; that was the expression. It just so happens it was the first time in 40 years that we sent troops into a Latin American country.

Well, less than two years later, President Johnson, in Punta del Este, Uruguay—and I happened to be down there as press attach# of USIS Montevideo at the time—met with every president of every single Latin American country, all of whom attended that historic summit conference. (No such meeting had ever been held before, and there hasn't been one since—at this writing.) So things aren't as drastic as they sometimes are reported to be.

Q: The presence of the American troops was not as badly received among the Latin American countries as made out by the American press, is that what you're saying?

HANSEN: No. At the time, it was received very badly by almost everyone, I think, especially many Latin Americans. But the final result was not as bad as some of the American press would have us believe at the time.

Q: With your year in Pennsylvania and then this assignment in Washington, this was the first time you'd been home in eight years or so, and you had a wife. Was she living in the United States for the first time?

HANSEN: Yes.

Q: Was the cultural shock of coming home very difficult, and was it that much more difficult for her?

HANSEN: I imagine it was, except that it was just another new culture and it wasn't all that difficult to adjust. We had two children by that time and a third one came along.

Anti-Terrorism

HANSEN: Two unique foreign policy issues in which the agency played and continues to play an important role are anti-terrorism and narcotics. I would like to make a few comments about them. With regard to the former, anti-terrorism, I was policy officer for Latin America in 1972 when terrorism was particularly rampant in Latin America. It was difficult to get many of my fellow USIA officers interested in this subject in those days, but a few of us believed that terrorism in the modern world was something USIA should be concerned about as an important foreign policy issue. I, therefore, pursued the subject more than some of my colleagues, with the result that I was assigned to participate with others in exploring what the U.S. Government might do about this growing phenomenon.

I was the USIA representative on a task force which met at State and had among its members a psychiatrist, since how hostages reacted during and after a terrorist incident was of concern, and a CIA representative because of their natural interest in this subject.

I wrote a paper for this group which essentially argued that USIA should not only include in its output information which helped explain why international cooperation was essential to combat terrorism, but also to discredit its use as a political weapon, and its users. Furthermore, the publicity purpose of terrorist acts made it a subject of special interest to USIA.

But like population control and later, narcotics, there were some bureaucrats and Foreign Service Officers who did not recognize—or did not want to recognize—that USIA had an important role to play in supporting U.S. foreign policy in what were, initially at least, somewhat esoteric fields. Eventually, of course, USIA included all of these things among its priorities at one time or another.

One sidelight on the terrorism issue. When it became an important enough subject for the Department of State to create an office to deal with this phenomenon, the office was referred to as the Office of Terrorism. I always thought that was subject to misinterpretation, and always referred to it myself as the Office of Anti-Terrorism. I was pleased to see that the State Department finally came around much later to calling the office, much more appropriately, the Office of Counterterrorism.

USIA Produces Anti-Narcotics Film

With respect to agency programs in narcotics, the first and possibly only film the agency ever produced on this subject was one which the Latin American office encouraged to be produced, because the issue was such an important one in Latin America at the time. I'm talking about the Office of the Assistant Director of USIA for Latin America as the office which urged that a USIA film should be produced on this subject.

The film was called “The Trip.” It's a case study of Colombia filmed by agency film producer Ashley Hawkin. I spent many hours trying to convince Ashley that a film on narcotics for Latin America was needed and could and should be produced. He finally agreed that film treatment could be done by using one country as a model. His wife

is Colombian, and Colombia, of course, even today, remains, unfortunately, a leading producer of illicit narcotics. This may have facilitated his ability to obtain the cooperation of Colombian authorities, which was, or course, needed to film in that country. In any event, the film was shown widely in Latin American on television and by direct projection, and Ashley rewarded me for my efforts by listing me as a technical advisor in the credits.

Two things this film demonstrated that are important. First, any society which gets involved in illicit international drug trafficking will sooner or later involve its own citizenry. Illicit drug trafficking involving other countries will unquestionably become, in due course, a major problem for the local population. I saw this happen in my four years in Peru and in my three years in Pakistan. Secondly, this problem must be dealt with in all of its facets—education, policy enforcement, drug treatment and rehabilitation; all must be used. This important point was also made in Ashley Hawkin's film.

The narcotics problem, if anything, is worse today than it was when it first became an international issue in the modern world, and only in 1988 have Americans begun to accept the idea that users should receive stiffer punishment than was the case heretofore. I think this is one of many needed efforts to combat illicit drug trafficking. Because the problem is so complex, a film dealing with this subject is extremely difficult to produce. As one film producer who had reviewed many films on the narcotics problem, and had produced a few himself, said in the early 1970s, “Some of the films produced about drugs are worse than the drugs themselves.” In the early 1970s, when the issue became hot for the American public, a number of films were produced domestically that were either not accurate or, worse, encouraged rather than discouraged use of illicit drugs. The scare tactics phase, for example, was used by some and simply didn't work.

Hansen Authors A Book on USIA

Two final thoughts with regard to this interview. My book on USIA, entitled USIA, Public Diplomacy in the Computer Age, was written entirely on my own time without any agency

encouragement, because I was interested in and believed in the work of USIA. Upon my return from Peru in 1980, the only overseas assignment offered to me was deputy PAO Islamabad, which, frankly, didn't interest me at the time. So I came back to Washington and was temporarily assigned to the Public Liaison and Congressional Relations Office, as it was known at that time. In that capacity I spent part of a year in Washington, the rest as Chief of the Latin American branch of the Office of Research. Both jobs gave me the opportunity for researching some of the materials for my book.

In 1981, the Islamabad job again came up, and this time my wife and I decided we would go for it, which we did, a decision we have never regretted. It turned out to be a marvelous experience for myself and my family, but not only that, it provided me with the time I needed to further develop a few papers I had written in Washington, and with the research I had undertaken there, to produce the manuscript which became the first book to be published about the agency in 16 years. It was published in 1984.

Islamabad's isolation and the fact that it was a relatively quiet Islamic society (despite the fact that the Pakistanis had burned down our embassy and destroyed two of our cultural centers two years before) enabled me to use many weekends and holidays to write my book. The week before leaving Washington for Islamabad, I had received a phone call from Praeger Publishers in New York in response to an outline I had sent them and the draft of the first few chapters. They were enthused about the project and, in due course, sent me a contract for its publication. It enjoyed two printings, and I am now, in agreement with the publisher, writing a revised edition which is due to appear in 1989. (Note: The manuscript for the second edition was completed in November, 1988; publication of the new edition is scheduled for October 1989.)

Finally, let me end this by saying that as I look back on my career of nearly 33 years as a Foreign Service Officer with USIA, having lived and worked in eight countries, it was an exciting, satisfying, and generally enjoyable experience, despite its frustrations and occasional difficult moments.

(Note: Not discussed above are experiences as Press Attach# in Uruguay at the time that Tupamaro terrorists were in the ascendancy and murdered, among others, Embassy staffer Dan Mitrione; in Bolivia as PAO which inspired an article entitled “No One Should Live Above Ten Thousand Feet,” dealing with the physical and mental effects of altitude especially for those living two miles up in the Bolivian capital, La Paz; as PAO in Peru and the time of the Peruvian transition from 12 years of military dictatorship to a return to an elected president; when cocaine production and its effects on the local population was growing; and when USIS was able to nurture the construction of three new binational center buildings in as many Peruvian cities; and as DPAO in Pakistan at the height of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which resulted in some three million Afghan refugees living among Pakistan's 85 million population, and at a time when Pakistan became the major heroin supplier for the U.S. and other western markets—which caused a heroin epidemic among the Pakistanis themselves.)ANNEX

The following is a copy of a memo I “unearthed” which I wrote thirty years ago when USIA was considering eliminating the American position in Georgetown which had just been established about two years earlier, in 1957, and which, as noted in the above interview, I was the first USIA Officer to fill—a.c.h., Jan. 28, 1989. (I do not recall why it is described as Memo No. 2.” The “Mr. McKnight” referred to is John McKnight. I was on home leave, and learning of the possible demise of the post where I had spent the last 18 months, I dashed off the memo in defense of maintaining an American officer there.)

UNCLASSIFIED

August 25, 1959

Memo No. 2

To: Mr. McKnight

From: A. Hansen

Subject: USIS Georgetown

In view of the pending decision as to whether or not to continue the BPAO position in Georgetown, it should be worth reflecting upon what has been accomplished there during the past year or so. This cannot be boiled down to one page, but below are listed some of what might be considered accomplishments. They are presented to assist in evaluating the necessity of continuing the APAO Georgetown position.

1. THUNDER, the PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY newspaper edited by Communist Ranji Chandisingh, continually attacked the U.S. until 8 or 10 months ago. The BPAO made the personal acquaintance of the editor, dined at his home, argued with him on many points. On Tibet he was silent; on race relations he contended, in all seriousness, that there is no racial prejudice in the Soviet Union. He admitted, under pressure, that the “Red Carpet” treatment was given him during his two-week visit to Moscow several year ago—that he could not judge the USSR fairly based on such a visit. Whether or not we were able to change his basic thinking I cannot say. His newspaper, however, has not reflected a single anti-American article, except for one or two isolated and justified criticisms about race relations during the past six to eight months.

2. The film THE LADY FROM PHILADELPHIA, shown to leading intellectuals and political leaders, including Janet JAGAN, so impressed the head of the B.G. Government Information Services hat he asked to buy a copy of the film for showing throughout the country, was presented with a copy on long-term loan, and has been showing it ever since.

3. The President of the B.G. Press Association, after viewing some USIS films, including ALTHEA GIBSON, commenting on the scene in that film where Miss Gibson receives a “Ticker-tape” parade, addressed the audience saying, in effect, “When we see that

happening in America we know that all of America is not Little Rock and that segregation is on its way out.

4. Before USIS began its daily press operation, servicing the four local dailies on an individual basis, few USIS stories were used and these were mostly plastics. Reuters predominated with its pointed barbs at the U.S. in telling “our” story. As an example of the change, in September, articles and features, 35 photos, and 18 anti-communist) cartoons printed in the local press—during the month of September alone!

5. The Guiana graphic, a tabloid with the largest circulation, never used to touch USIS materials. During the past year they published dozens of IPS photos concerning achievements of American Negroes; “COMRADES”; U.S. scientific achievements; and all USIS releases written locally. When the GRAPHIC damned the U.S. editorially for alleged mistreatment of Guianese farm workers, the true facts were dug up by USIS, the Labor Commissioner's cooperation was sought and obtained and the U.S. and its farm labor program were completely vindicated in a GRAPHIC editorial. Other criticism of the program ceased entirely.

6. The British Guiana Legislature passed a resolution condemning the death sentence of a Negro in Alabama accused of attempted rape of an elderly white woman. The local press took up the cry, particularly the GUIANA GRAPHIC. The PAO visited each editor personally, cited the 10th Amendment of the Constitution which reserves all power not specifically granted to the federal government for the states, thus tying the hands of the federal government on this specific case, and explained how President Eisenhower and others had urged the Governor of Alabama to exercise leniency. A copy of an IPS pamphlet on the U.S. Government and Constitution was gratefully accepted at the same time by each editor. No further criticism appeared in the local press.

7. Ten days ago, the B.G. Press Association Honored the departing BPAO by holding a special function and presenting him with a map of B.G. carved from “greenheart,” B.G.'s

famous wood. Even on the last night in Georgetown of the writer, the situation was framed in the ever-present consciousness of the Guianese non-whites of the great desire to be “accepted” as an equal. In a stirring speech one Guianese newspaperman praised the American attitude of “equality” which enabled the BPAO to be accepted as a “Guianese.”

Other examples could be given—the above came readily to mind.

How much of the above could have been accomplished without an American on the spot?

End of interview